

Waganakising Odawak
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
Dexter McNamara, Tribal Chairman
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Phone 231-242-1401 • Fax 231-242-1412

September 10, 2012

The Honorable Judy Emmons, Chair
Senate Families, Seniors & Human Services Committee
PO Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Senator Emmons:

As Tribal Chairman of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians ("LTBB"), I want to take this opportunity to thank you for introducing Senate Bill 1232, the Michigan Indian Families Preservation Act (MIFPA). I have been notified that there will be a committee hearing this week. This letter represents my official support of SB 1232 with the attached amendments prepared by the MIFPA – SB 1232 Taskforce. The LTBB Tribal Council made an official Declaration supporting the draft MIFPA and concurs with my support of SB 1232 with the attached amendments. A new Declaration from the LTBB Tribal Council will be forthcoming.


The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians recognizes that there is no resource more vital to the continued existence, vitality and integrity of the Tribe than its children. As stated in our LTBB Constitution, Article I, section B.2 and section B.5; the LTBB has a duty to protect and nurture our children who comprise our future leaders, citizens and voters. A major component to retaining this vitality is to make sure that State statute remains consistent with federal law. The protections provided by the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 ("ICWA"), which would be reinforced and clarified in SB 1232, will ensure that the Tribe's interest in maintaining legal/cultural connections with its children is preserved and the strength and vitality of Indian families is promoted and preserved, consistent with the best interests of Indian children.

Unfortunately, it has been found that in the past, there have been continued inconsistencies in the application of ICWA by officials within the State of Michigan. Senate Bill 1232 will help provide clarity and reinforcement of ICWA policies at the State level, which is the reason for this letter proclaiming my support.

The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians has been strongly represented in the drafting process of MIFPA – SB 1232, and remains on the Taskforce who have determined that there are amendments to be considered at the committee hearing this week. I am attaching the list of suggested amendments to the introduced bill with a rationale for why these amendments are needed.

Again, thank you for introducing Senate Bill 1232. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Dexter McNamara".

Dexter McNamara, Tribal Chairman
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

cc: The Honorable Rick Snyder, Governor
The Honorable Maura Corrigan, Director, MI Department of Human Services
The Honorable Mike Nofs, State Senator